



## News Release

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### **Utah #1 in Combating Smoking, Cancer, Infant Mortality** *State Named 6<sup>th</sup> Healthiest in Nation in New Report*

(SALT LAKE CITY) — Thanks to healthy babies, low cancer death rates and enviably low smoking rates, Utah remains in the spotlight for being one of the top ten healthiest states in the Nation. Utah ranks 6<sup>th</sup> this year in United Health Foundation's (UHF) 17<sup>th</sup> annual *America's Health Rankings*<sup>TM</sup> report. The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) reports the state has posted improvements in motor vehicle deaths, infectious diseases, immunization rates and infant mortality which are reflected in the report.

The state did drop this year from a 4<sup>th</sup> place ranking in 2005 due to an increase in the number of Utahns without health insurance coverage. There were also statistically insignificant increases in smoking and obesity.

"All these health indicators are very fluid and change for every state year by year," said Cyndi Bemis, UDOH public information specialist. "A drop of two places isn't cause for alarm," she said. "Still, the UHF report is a valuable tool, a reminder of how far we've come and how far we need to go to help all Utahns get healthier."

The report indicates Utah ranks in the top 10 in 9 of the 18 determinants, including;

Infant mortality	1 <sup>st</sup> (up from 6 <sup>th</sup> )
Prevalence of smoking	1 <sup>st</sup> (no change)
Cancer deaths	1 <sup>st</sup> (no change)
Cardiovascular deaths	8 <sup>th</sup> (up from 10 <sup>th</sup> )
Motor vehicle deaths	8 <sup>th</sup> (up from 10 <sup>th</sup> )
Total mortality	9 <sup>th</sup> (no previous info available)
Premature death (years of life lost)	10 <sup>th</sup> (down from 7 <sup>th</sup> )

The remaining two determinants are Violent Crime, for which Utah ranks 6<sup>th</sup> (up from 8<sup>th</sup> in 2005) and Children in Poverty, with a 7<sup>th</sup> place ranking (up from 16<sup>th</sup> in 2005).

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There are many factors at work in Utah's consistent top 10 ranking over the UHF report's 17-year history. "The rankings symbolize much of the valuable work done in public health," said Dr. David Sundwall, executive director, UDOH. "But public health recognizes the influence and contributions of the entire health care system," he said. "Utah is fortunate to have prominent community, family and environmental supports that lead to healthier behaviors, as well as a solid framework of medical care options that allow for life-saving and life-improving procedures."

Utah, as with the rest of the nation, still has work to do in the area of child immunizations, obesity and health coverage for all Utahns. In 2006, only 74.1 percent of children ages 19 to 35 months were fully immunized, leaving one-fourth of those toddlers unprotected and at risk of contracting and spreading preventable diseases. Regarding health insurance, the number of uninsured Utahns rose by 18 percent since 2005, and the number of obese Utahns increased by four percent.

Despite these increases, Utah's 6<sup>th</sup> place ranking tells a story of a robust population with a strong infrastructure and dedicated public health workers addressing a broad spectrum of health issues.

To view the 2006 Report Card on Utah's Health, see the attached .pdf file. For a full copy of the *America's Health Rankings™ 2006 Edition*, visit <http://www.unitedhealthfoundation.org/ahr2006.html>

For more information, contact Cyndi Bemis at 801-550-4228.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death; assuring access to affordable, quality health care; and promoting healthy lifestyles.*